

What I Am Thankful For

Kyle G. Roberts, Assistant Treasurer, Korean War Veterans Association, Inc.

Last month through the [Korean War Veterans Association](#), I had the opportunity to participate in the South Korea Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs (MPVA) [Revisit Korea Program](#). In 1975, on the 25th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War, the Republic of Korea government began the *Revisit Korea Program* as a means to say thank you to all UN veterans of the Korean War and their family members. Working closely with Korean Tourism organizations, the MPVA shows America's war veterans the end result of the conflict that took place in Korea between 1950 and 1953. South Korea has risen from the ashes of ruin and its economic, social, and diplomatic development are a great source of pride for foreign war veterans who fought for the South under the United Nations banner.

The Revisit Korea Program focused on war-related venues, including the War Memorial of Korea, military bases, the United Nations Peace Memorial Hall, and the Joint Security Area in the Demilitarized Zone (Panmunjom). We conducted wreath laying and incense burning ceremonies and participated in the 72nd UN Day Ceremony in Busan and UN Forces Commemoration Ceremony of Changjin Campaign Heroes (Battle of Chosin Reservoir) at the Seoul National Cemetery along with over 5,000 people.

Of particular interest was the "Thank You Letter" read by a guy who was actually born during the evacuation of [Hungnam](#) in North Korea. His mother was one of the 14,000 refugees transported on the SS Meredith Victory, the largest evacuation from land by a single ship. This was made possible by a declaration of national emergency by President Truman issued on 16 December 1950. This operation was the culmination of the Battle of Chosin Reservoir, in which the embattled UN troops fought their way out of a Chinese trap. Since Major General Oliver P. Smith did not speak Korean, he only knew "Kimchi", the Korean traditional side dish made from salted and fermented vegetables, most commonly cabbage and radishes. So he named the five children born on the ship, "Kimchi 1 through Kimchi 5". One of the pics below is Kimchi 5 reading a "Thank You Letter" to the UN Forces. One of the veterans on our trip assisted in the evacuation.

I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in this program but I am even more grateful to the Republic of Korea for acknowledging the contributions of the US and UN forces. They treated these veterans like royalty. Their country has never forgotten their sacrifices and although the Korean War is often referred to as the "Forgotten War", it was abundantly clear that the Republic of Korea has not forgotten. For six days, my father, a US Navy Korean War Veteran beamed from ear to ear. For this, I am especially thankful.